

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
City Council & Planning Commission Joint Workshop
City Hall
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

MINUTES
Wednesday, August 6, 2025
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:34 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON_X__ LEEHY_X__
 MEYER_X__ MIELKE_X__ WASSENBERG_X__

 TRACY__ BROOKS_X__
 ANDERSON_X__ PAYNTER__
 MOGEN_X__ SEIFERT_X__
 HALLOWANGER_X__

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN_X__ JOHNSON_X__ LYNCH_X__

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Les Bolstad Golf Course Sale Stakeholder Discussion

Linehan explained that staff will provide background information on current work and introduced Leslie Krueger, Assistant Vice President, from the University of Minnesota.

Lynch reported that on June 6, the University notified the City of its intent to sell the Les Bolstad Golf Course. She reviewed the site, noting that it is currently zoned P-1 (public land). Under City Code, if sold the property would revert to R-1 (single-family residential) zoning.

Lynch provided examples of similar redevelopment projects and their timelines, including:

- The Heights in St. Paul (former Hillcrest Golf Course)
- Century Ponds in Maplewood (former Ponds at Battle Creek Golf Course)
- Rice Creek Commons in Arden Hills (former Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant)
- Highland Bridge in St. Paul (former Ford Motor Plant, still in progress)

Next steps include identifying stakeholders, establishing priorities, and determining the most important public outcomes. The discussion should also focus on how potential redevelopment could contribute to the quality of life in Falcon Heights.

Krueger stated that her goal was to provide context as the process begins. She noted that the University has worked with other cities, such as Rosemount, on the sale and redevelopment of University-owned land, but emphasized that each site is unique. She provided background on the Les Bolstad Golf Course, explaining that for the past

two decades the University has explored various options, including renovation studies and potential private operating partners. These efforts were unsuccessful, largely due to the significant capital investments required. The University is now pursuing a sale to avoid major capital costs, better align with its mission and finances, support strategic land use planning, and consider community redevelopment opportunities.

Krueger noted that golf course revenues have not been sufficient to cover capital needs, the site lacks an operating clubhouse, and golf operations do not align with the University's mission. Proceeds from a sale would be reinvested in facilities at the St. Paul campus. Next, she outlined the sale process: University administration will notify the Board of Regents of its intent to dispose of the property; the property will first be offered to the municipality, county, and state; if there is no interest, the University's real estate office will issue an RFP; and stakeholders will be engaged to identify an appropriate buyer and developer. The University will then negotiate purchase and sale agreements, followed by an extensive due diligence period for the buyer.

Linehan reported that, based on conversations with other organizations that have undertaken similar projects, it is important to identify stakeholders early in the process. He noted that the corridor study is not fully comprehensive, and that any subdivision of the property would go through the Planning Commission and then City Council. He emphasized the need for a unified voice and clear guidance.

Wassenberg asked if staff had developed a list of potential stakeholders. Linehan responded that no list had been created intentionally to avoid steering the discussion. He noted that St. Paul and Maplewood created advisory bodies similar to task forces for comparable projects, and that there is also the option to establish a formal body with defined authority. Wassenberg and Leehy expressed a preference for a smaller group to complete the preliminary work. Anderson agreed that it would be best to first discuss the desired outcomes before determining stakeholders.

Mogen noted that the City will not be purchasing the property and will need to work with a developer. He asked about the University's past experience with land sales and redevelopment. Krueger explained that the process is similar to the University's 435-acre project in Rosemount, where a master plan and land use plan were created, incorporating PUDs and multiple housing developers. She said the City of Rosemount had already completed environmental documentation to provide direction, and that developers presented their own visions, which were then refined with the City to align with local goals. When asked about the University's role in the RFP process, Krueger said the University used existing plans and design guidelines, while referring developers back to City codes and requirements.

Councilmember Mielke raised questions about staff involvement, and Krueger explained that University staff were engaged and worked with the City Council and Planning Commission. Linehan added that the City could consider completing a master plan prior to identifying a developer, which would require City funding. Discussion followed on the timing of forming an advisory board, with Linehan noting it would depend on the overall project schedule. McKenzie, the Director of Campus and Capital Planning, suggested the use of an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR), as Rosemount had done by hiring a planning firm to establish a baseline for development. Gustafson asked how Falcon Heights could assist the University in shaping the RFP.

Krueger responded that establishing a community vision, supported by information on infrastructure, would provide valuable direction to developers.

Meyer emphasized the importance of creating a clear picture of community goals, which would help attract a developer whose proposal aligns with local needs. He also asked about the scope of an AUAR. Krueger explained that the City would determine the level of environmental review and noted the University's goal of releasing an RFP in the near future. Mielke suggested adding recommendations to the corridor study, while Krueger proposed a co-hosted public meeting to identify community values that could be reflected in the RFP. Hallowanger added that developers often host their own community engagement sessions.

Mogen asked about the AUAR process in Rosemount and who determined development elements there. Krueger said the University had initially created its own vision but later shifted to a market-based approach when it determined direct real estate development was not aligned with its mission. Instead, land was sold in parts to developers who worked with the City. She clarified that the University does not have the resources to act as a developer and that its role will diminish once a buyer is selected, leaving the City with a greater role. Krueger also noted that the clubhouse on the golf course is designated as historic, and that the trolley path is part of the University Grove common areas and not included in the sale.

Discussion then turned to financing and infrastructure responsibilities. Meyer asked about city concessions such as TIF, and Linehan responded that those details would emerge during the due diligence process as infrastructure needs are identified. Councilmembers stressed the importance of outcomes that reflect Falcon Heights' character, with connections to surrounding cities through trail systems and more cohesive neighborhoods. Wassenberg noted the City's current disconnection and called for ways to reduce segmentation. Leehy raised the importance of involving Lauderdale, Roseville, Gibbs Farm, and the State in future conversations, while Wassenberg reminded the group to consider future Falcon Heights residents who do not yet have a voice. Other members emphasized sustainability, green development, and long-term community benefit.

Mogen urged that the project vision be forward-looking, while Leehy and Mielke pointed out that infrastructure impacts would extend to Lauderdale, Roseville, and Ramsey County, as the surrounding roads are county-owned. Gustafson referenced the corridor study, which included mixed housing and a small commercial district, and stressed the importance of creating a welcoming, connected community. Brooks added that a simple vision statement with clear goals would be helpful for developers, noting that growth in the tax base would also require expanded services.

Councilmembers also discussed the timing of the RFP. Krueger said the University hoped to issue it in the fall for a 60-75 day period, but emphasized that a successful sale and closing were the priority. Wassenberg asked about the University's trust in Falcon Heights to guide development, and Krueger affirmed that the corridor study aligned with community values. She also highlighted the University's climate plan, noting the importance of transportation, and described Falcon Heights as a valuable community for the University's workforce.

Further discussion included potential housing needs, with Krueger stating that while little student housing currently exists near the St. Paul campus, the University operates housing in Minneapolis with transit options to St. Paul. She noted that no additional planning for CTC housing had been completed. Councilmembers also discussed conservation easements, with Krueger saying she did not believe they were necessary given the urban setting.

Krueger concluded by stating that infrastructure information and a clear community vision would be most helpful to the University during the RFP process. Linehan added that public engagement and envisioning would continue as the RFP moves forward, and that the University's 2030 Master Plan will soon begin. Councilmembers discussed options for an advisory group, with some preferring a small, technical body and others suggesting representatives from commissions. Members agreed that determining the composition of the advisory group should be addressed at a future meeting.

The discussion closed with acknowledgment that the Les Bolstad Golf Course site is an opportunity for both the University and Falcon Heights, and that creating a clear vision and strong partnerships will be critical to guiding redevelopment.

2. City Code Updates

Lynch provided an overview of proposed code changes, beginning with updates to the definitions section. All definitions previously scattered throughout the code have been consolidated, and new definitions have been added where needed. Any definitions that contained specific rules were amended so that the rules now appear in the appropriate sections of code rather than in the definition itself.

She explained several key changes. Variances, Conditional Use Districts (CUD), and Planned Unit Developments (PUD) now include the right to appeal and a requirement that property taxes be current. Variances also add a public hearing requirement, which is not required by state law, but is strongly recommended. For PUDs, an expiration timeline is being considered, along with a new requirement for an informal meeting with the Planning Commission when a developer brings forward a PUD proposal. Additional clarifications have been made regarding accessory and utility buildings, setbacks, and rules for R-5 zoning districts, which are classified as high-density. Under the update, single-family homes in R-5 districts would follow R-1 zoning standards. The discussion then shifted to notification requirements. Meyer asked about distance thresholds, and Lynch noted that while state law requires 350 feet, the City typically uses 500 feet.

Lynch also reviewed new definitions for permeable and impervious surfaces. The code has been updated to allow driveways to be constructed with permeable materials, but plastic grid pavers filled with grass or gravel are not permitted. She noted that the Department of Natural Resources provides guidelines, and other cities typically do not grant stormwater credit for permeable pavers. Council discussed challenges in calculating permeable surface credit, with Mogen noting it may be difficult to enforce and Anderson and Wassenberg agreeing. Lynch suggested the provision could serve as an educational tool, while Mogen added it could be applied as a condition in variance approvals. Leehy and Meyer asked for clarification on where permeable surfaces are

allowed, and Lynch confirmed they are permitted throughout the city, except for driveways.

On boat and trailer storage, Lynch explained that updates would allow storage in driveways between April 1 and November 15, with storage in the side or rear yards permitted from November 15 to April 1. Wassenberg commented that this was a reasonable approach. A discussion followed on side yard storage, with Wassenberg suggesting a five-foot setback with screening. Lynch noted that under current rules, storing boats or trailers in driveways is out of compliance.

Trash can placement was also clarified. Cans may be placed in front of garages as long as they remain behind the front line of the main structure.

Lynch then raised questions about lawn maintenance, noting that some native bee lawns may appear unkempt. Mogen suggested requiring property owners to register their bee lawns with the City by submitting a planting list, after which the City could provide an official sign designating it as a native bee lawn. This, he said, would both promote pollinator-friendly lawns and align with the City's climate action plan. Council discussed setbacks, boulevard planting rules, and safety requirements. Lynch noted that boulevard plantings require City approval, and Wassenberg emphasized maintaining height restrictions at corners for visibility. Lynch clarified that a two-foot setback is required and vegetation taller than six inches is generally restricted, although bee lawns would be exempt from the height limit except for the setback requirement.

The conversation then turned to other topics. Wassenberg asked about clear-cutting, and Lynch responded that the definition is being relocated in the code. Lynch also noted updates related to farmers' markets, which are currently only allowed at Blaze Credit Union in B-2 zoning. The proposed changes would expand opportunities, allowing markets in R-5M districts with a special event permit. Mogen recommended also allowing them in B-3, while Wassenberg raised concerns about the current minimum lot size requirement of 10,000 square feet, pointing out that many Northome lots are closer to 5,000–6,000 square feet. With redevelopment at the golf course, he said, smaller lot sizes may need to be considered. Lynch agreed to research how other cities regulate duplex lot sizes and zoning standards.

The discussion closed with Council highlighting the importance of ensuring definitions and standards remain clear and practical.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 9:48 PM

Councilmember Leehy motions to adjourn;
Approved 5-0

Commissioner Brooks motions to adjourn;
Approved 5-0

Dated this 27th day of August, 2025



Jack Linehan, City Administrator



Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor